

ABM - TALKS

## U.S., Soviets Plan Meeting on ABM

By Henry S. Bradsher

MOSCOW, March 23 (AP)—

The United States and the Soviet Union began today to arrange for negotiations to limit the arms race in offensive and defensive nuclear missiles.

Washington is seeking to check the Soviet construction of antiballistic missile (ABM) defenses, which threatens to force the United States into a massively expensive program of its own.

Kremlin leaders are not committed yet to slow down their ABM effort, but are interested in a deal to reduce the present American advantage in offensive intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

### Two Obstacles

Experts are expected to meet in Moscow to consider whether anything can be worked out.

Two main obstacles are visible to diplomats here.

One is that traditional Soviet military thinking places great emphasis on defense. The powerful military interests in the Kremlin might refuse to be overruled if Soviet civilian economic reasoning favors arms limitations.

The other obstacle is Soviet refusal to allow foreign inspectors to come here and check up on any disarmament agreement.

President Johnson announced three weeks ago that the Russians had agreed "to discuss means of limiting the arms race in offensive and defensive nuclear missiles."

### Thompson Calls

After a delay while Washington sent instructions to the U.S. Embassy here on what negotiation arrangements to propose, Ambassador Llewellyn E. Thompson called today on Foreign Minister Gromyko.

The Embassy announced that for 30 minutes they "continued preliminary discussions." No details were given.

The Russians said nothing. The Soviet press has never reported Mr. Johnson's statement on the agreement about talks.

Mr. Johnson opened discussions with a letter Jan. 27 to Premier Kosygin. It proposed talks on limiting ABM systems.

Kosygin replied at the end of February that the Soviet Union would talk about ABM systems and offensive weapons, too. Mr. Johnson accepted Kosygin's linking of the two subjects.

### U.S. Advantage

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara says the United States has a 3-to-1 advantage over the Soviet Union in offensive missiles, 1446 to 470 ICBMs. He has contended that no ABM system can be effective, that some attacking missiles will always be able to get through.

Therefore, McNamara argues, it is a waste of money—up to \$40 billion for the United States—to build ABM defenses.

President Johnson has expressed concern that Soviet building of ABM defenses might force the United States into joining a senseless new round in the arms race.

The disclosure about the Soviet ABM program has already inspired some Americans to call for a matching U.S. program.

The extent of the Soviet ABM program is not known.

The Russians have not commented publicly on Mr. Johnson's announcement but today's edition of Pravda, in a survey of Soviet foreign policy, said this country wants the cessation of the arms race, including rocket and nuclear weapons."